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# Soil and Water Conservation News

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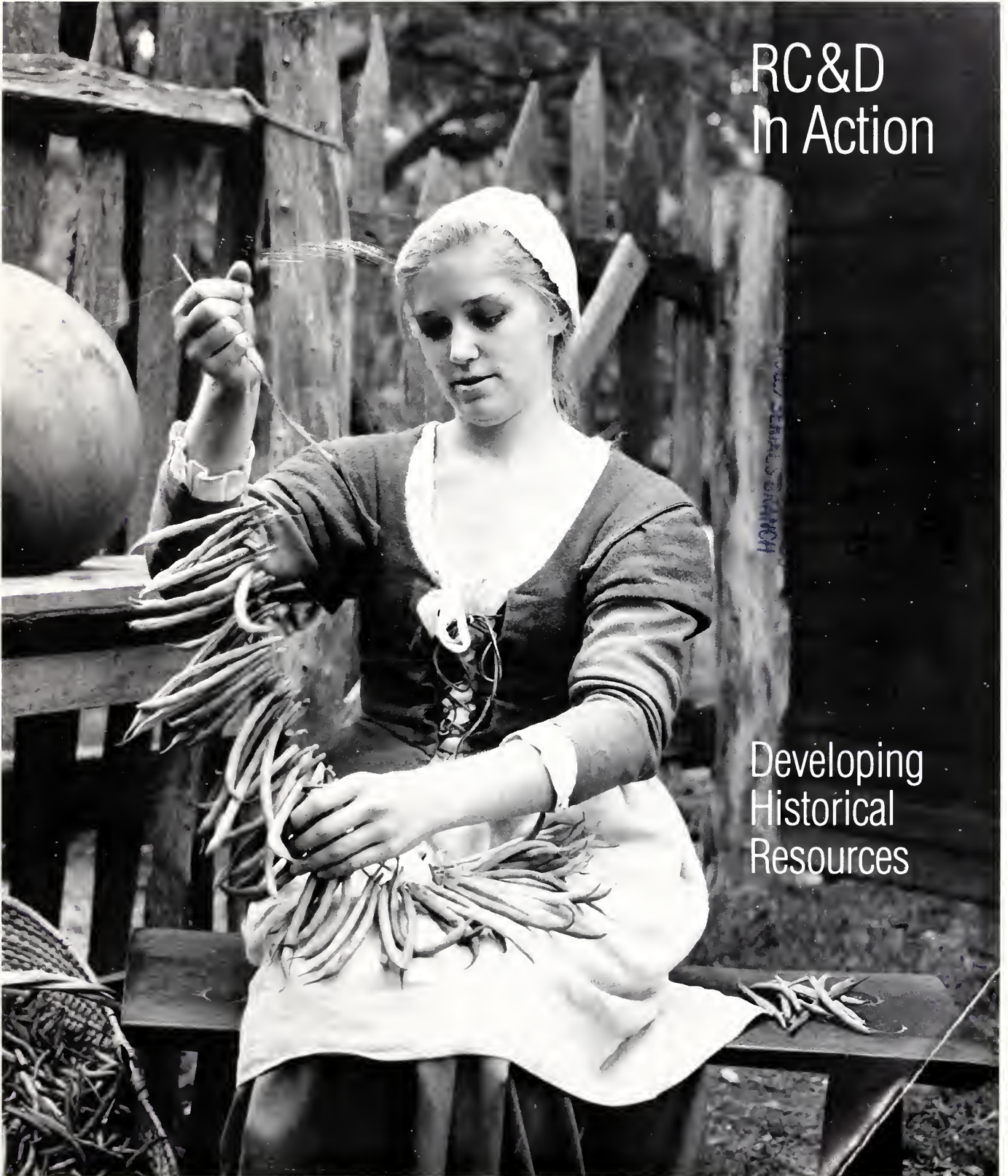
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RC&D  
In Action

Developing  
Historical  
Resources



**Cover:** The Southern Maryland RC&D Area Council is helping to develop 350-year-old St. Mary's City as an outdoor museum of history, archaeology, and natural history. Demonstrations of early American farm life are among the many attractions (Photo by Dennis Caudill.)

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# Comments from the SCS Chief:

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors

THE RESOURCE Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program is about neighbors helping neighbors across rural America.

In RC&D areas across 1,300 counties, more than 4,000 people volunteer their time and talent to serve as RC&D council members. And these folks are making things happen. We in the Soil Conservation Service appreciate their efforts.

RC&D council members are spurring local economies by helping people diversify their interests. They're bringing new and profitable ideas in recreation, tourism, forestry, and farm products. They're solving critical erosion problems for schools and historic sites; cutting flood damage; and helping to improve water quality and quantity, solve waste disposal problems, and improve local emergency assistance. In some areas, RC&D councils are helping to accelerate conservation planning to meet 1985 Farm Bill deadlines.

Through local training programs, councils are learning to obtain grants and other resources from private as well as public sources. And councils tell me that obtaining private funding often has a snowball effect. When people in the private sector see the good things RC&D is doing for their communities, they want to be a part of it, too. This is helping councils accomplish even more.

SCS administers the RC&D program and appoints a coordinator who works closely with councils on meeting their goals and objectives. Coordinators can be from SCS or the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Forest Service, Extension Service, or Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service—our partners in rural development.

Through their ingenuity, dedication, and hard work, RC&D council members are making good things happen throughout rural America for themselves and their neighbors. I applaud their efforts to make rural America a better place to live.





# RC&D In Action

## Trail For Historic St. Mary's

**T**HERE'S A NEW WAY of getting around town in St. Mary's City, Md. It's a walking trail installed with support from the Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area.

A new walking trail would hardly seem important for a town that hasn't grown much over the past 350 years. But for the thousands of visitors who come here every year to stroll through history, it's a welcome addition.

When settlers sailed up the Chesapeake Bay in 1634 and landed on the shore of the St. Mary's River, they founded what was to become the fourth permanent English settlement in North America. St. Mary's City soon became a bustling port for exporting tobacco to Europe and served as the first capital of Maryland. After the capital was moved in 1695, however, the town lost population and faded in importance until 20th century archaeologists digging into the site of the old settlement began to uncover a wealth of artifacts. Since 1969, the site has yielded more than a million artifacts—not only of the 17th-century English settlement but also of the many aboriginal cultures that preceded it.

To preserve and protect this resource, the State of Maryland acquired 814 acres of the original



A 5-mile trail system has been built at Historic St. Mary's City, Md., with assistance from the Southern Maryland RC&D Council. (Photo by Ron Nichols.)

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The trail consists mostly of gravel and fill dirt hauled in from surrounding areas to avoid disturbing ground unusually rich with artifacts.

town site and opened it in 1984 as Historic St. Mary's City (HSMC), an outdoor museum of history, archaeology, and natural history. HSMC now receives about 60,000 visitors a year, about 8,000 of whom are in school groups.

With technical and financial assistance provided through the RC&D council, a 5-mile trail was built to carry foot traffic from the visitor center to the reconstructed 1676 State House and other buildings, a tobacco plantation, exhibits, and some of the 150 archaeological sites in the area. Along the trail are drinking fountains, rest rooms, and informative trail markers.

"The original settlement was so spread out along the shoreline," said Joe Anderson, director of HSMC, "that a trail connecting all of the important sites was an integral part of the overall development plan. The availability of RC&D assistance was a way of making it a reality."

Construction of the trail, designed by the Soil Conservation Service, began in 1987 and is now in its final phase. The trail consists mostly of gravel and fill dirt hauled in from surrounding areas to avoid disturbing ground unusually rich with artifacts. Several wooden bridges were built where the trail crosses creeks and wetlands.

"The trail has become one of the museum's major attractions," said Anderson. "Not only are people using it to get to the major historical attractions, but some are using it just to walk along the river or through the wetlands to watch the birds or look at the wildflowers."



Silas D. Hurry, director of the Archaeological Laboratory of Historic St. Mary's City, Md., displays one of more than a million artifacts that have been uncovered at the site of the 17th century English settlement. (Photo by Ron Nichols.)

Shoreline erosion is an ever-present threat in the area, and HSMC has developed a conservation plan with the St. Mary's County Soil Conservation District to bring it under control. Signs along the trail will point out conservation plantings and other measures being used to stabilize critical areas of the shoreline.

"This trail is an ideal RC&D project," said Bill Boyer, coordinator for the Southern Maryland RC&D Area, LaPlata, Md., "because it

helps conserve and develop so many different resources at the same time. In the process of conserving an area of great historical and archaeological interest, we're also helping to teach people about conservation and to develop tourism and other aspects of the local economy."

**Paul Barker**, associate editor, *Soil and Water Conservation News*, SCS, Washington, D.C.



To fight fires in rural areas without the dry hydrants, tanker trucks have to be filled in town, driven to the fire scene, emptied, and driven back to town to fill up again.

## Dry Hydrants Tap Water Sources

**P**EOPLE LIVING in rural areas have a double dilemma when it comes to fighting fire: there are no ready fire hydrants to tap, and their home insurance costs depend on the ability of local fire departments to react quickly with a reliable and sufficient supply of water.

Working through the Chestatee-Chattahoochee and Oconee River Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area Councils, community leaders in 23 northeast Georgia counties, representing a half million people, have

developed a dry hydrant assistance program to tap water held in farm ponds, conservation lakes, and irrigation ponds. Dry hydrants are a nonpressurized pipe system permanently installed in existing lakes, ponds, and streams to provide a ready suction supply of water to a tanker truck. Materials for the systems include polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe, metal couplings, and adapters. The systems cost approximately \$500 each.

To fight fires in rural areas without the dry hydrants, tanker trucks have to be filled in town, driven to the fire scene, emptied, and driven back to town to fill up again. Usually, four tanker trucks are needed to provide fire fighters a steady supply of water.

The RC&D dry hydrant program was started with funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. Labor and equipment were supplied by volunteer fire

departments and county and State governments. The Georgia Forestry Commission and the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission assisted with master fire plans, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service provided engineering assistance on proper installation of the dry hydrants.

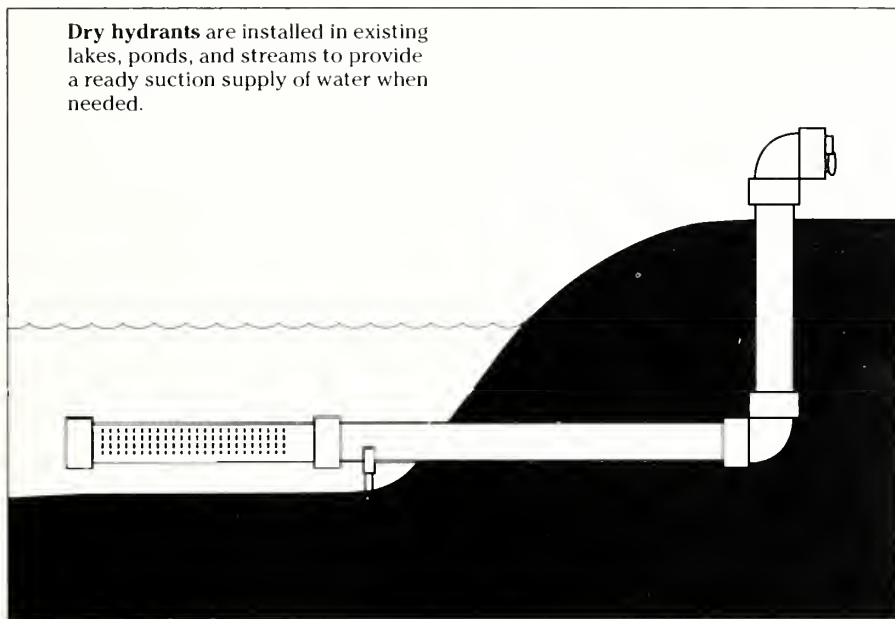
One district fire department in Forsyth County reported that the use of dry hydrants saved it 2,000 gallons of fuel per year by reducing the distance tanker trucks must travel for water. According to the Georgia Department of Energy, the total estimated cost of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D dry hydrant program will be \$220,000. If Forsyth County's fuel savings is representative of the area's 110 district fire departments, based on fuel savings alone the system would be paid for in 1.25 years.

In addition, the dry hydrant program saves homeowners money on their fire insurance premiums. In Forsyth County, homeowners saved \$200 per year on their homeowners insurance, a drop of 49 percent on homes valued at an average of \$85,000.

Rural communities in the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Area are reaping other benefits from the dry hydrants: they make unprocessed water available for maintaining gravel roads, and they offer small towns the ability to make better use of their limited storage facilities for drinking water.

**Jerry L. Boling**, coordinator,  
Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Area,  
Gainesville, Ga.

Dry hydrants are installed in existing lakes, ponds, and streams to provide a ready suction supply of water when needed.



Developmentally disabled adults, many of them also physically handicapped, who were working with the Services for the Developmentally Disabled, volunteered more than 4,000 hours of labor to the project.

## Overlook Adapted for Use by Handicapped

**A** SHORT DRIVE above the town of Durango, in the southwestern corner of Colorado, is the Animas Overlook, where visitors can view 14,000-foot peaks sheltering the San Juan Basin, flowing rivers and creeks, and semiarid deserts. It is beautiful but, until recently, inaccessible to the physically handicapped.

In 1987, the Professional Business Women of Durango, who had worked closely with the Services for the Developmentally Disabled (formerly the Four Corners Sheltered Workshop) on other projects, approached the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service about making the Animas Overlook more accessible to people in wheelchairs and on crutches.

The Forest Service asked the San Juan Resource Conservation

and Development (RC&D) Council to help involve other citizens and groups in Durango. From these meetings, the Animas Overlook Project was conceived and developed.

Developmentally disabled adults, many of them also physically handicapped, who were working with the Services for the Developmentally Disabled, volunteered more than 4,000 hours of labor to the project. Their special expertise enabled project coordinators to adjust the overlook so that handicapped visitors can easily use the rest rooms, picnic tables, and barbecue grills. They also widened a paved trail that is two-thirds of a mile long and that includes many overlooks and interpretative sites.

Adjustments included: raising the legs on picnic tables and moving them toward the center on one end so people in wheelchairs can move themselves up to the tables;

## Rent-A-Drill Program Saves Fuel

**F**OLLOWING a severe drought in 1986, a farm inventory of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council's 13-county area indicated the need to replant 150,000 acres of pastureland. The inventory showed a loss of 80 percent of the pasture grasses and increased soil erosion.

Because using conventional tillage to replant the pastures would have taken about 5 gallons of fuel an acre and increased soil erosion, the RC&D council adopted a measure to recommend that no-till methods be used to restore the pas-

tures. The council realized, however, that while landowners knew about the techniques and benefits of no-till, it wasn't feasible for them because of the high cost of no-till equipment.

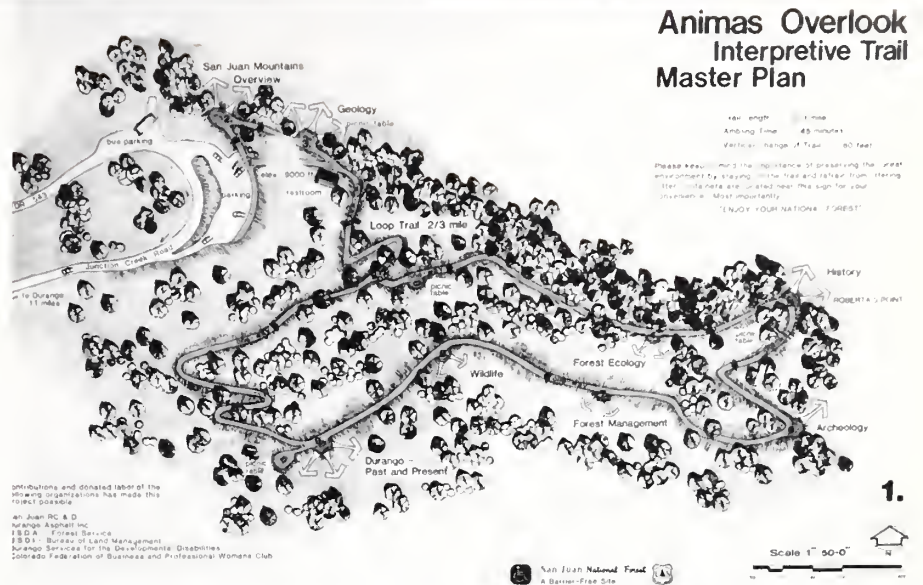
The RC&D council calculated that the fuel savings of using no-till met the requirements for a grant through the State of Georgia from the U.S. Department of Energy. Working with local soil and water conservation districts, the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and the Georgia Office of Energy Resources, the council received a \$161,350 grant to purchase seven tractors and eight no-till drills with which to establish a



redesigning the barbecue grills with lightweight metal fastened to a fixed arm so that people in wheelchairs or on crutches can lift the grill up and spin it out of the way with one hand; and lining the wide paved paths with rock to prevent wheelchairs from accidentally going over the edge.

Total cost for the project was about \$36,000, most of which has been provided by the Forest Service and a local asphalt company. With volunteer labor provided by the community's handicapped and developmentally disabled, the Animas Overlook is one of the first overlooks in the State to be adjusted for use by the handicapped.

**Noel Wellborn**, coordinator, and **Barbara Jordan**, secretary, San Juan RC&D Area, Durango, Colo.



Nearly all areas of the Animas Overlook above Durango, Colo., are now accessible to people in wheelchairs.

**Rent-A-Drill Program.** The tractor/no-till drill units are rented to landowners for a small fee. The council also provides an operator.

During 1988, the first year of the program, more than 5,000 acres was planted on almost 300 farms, saving over 20,000 gallons of fuel. The program was so successful, it was expanded to include the entire State. A grant from the Georgia Office of Energy Resources for \$1/2 million dollars was used to purchase 23 tractor/no-till drill units and hire operators for the state-wide program.

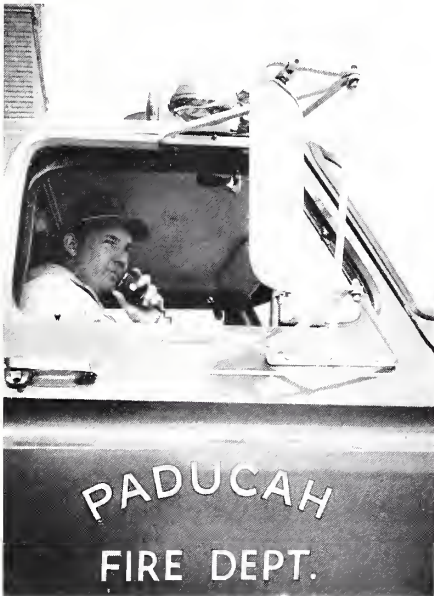
**Jerry L. Boling**, coordinator, Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Area, Gainesville, Ga.



One of the tractor/no-till drill units—complete with operator—available through the Rent-A-Drill Program of the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council.

In addition to residential and commercial fires, the all volunteer fire fighters' responsibilities include about a million acres of rangeland susceptible to grass fires.

## Rural Fire Fighters Join Forces



Volunteer firefighter Bill Cartwright Jr. using radio system installed with RC&D assistance for the seven-county Rolling Plains Fire Fighters' Association in the Texas Panhandle.

**B**Y FORMING a new association, fire fighters in seven Texas Panhandle counties have turned themselves into a topnotch rural fire-fighting team. With help from the Four Winds Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area Council, the Texas Forest Service, and local governments, the seven counties formed the Rolling Plains Fire Fighters' Association about 3 years ago.

In addition to residential and commercial fires, the all volunteer fire fighters' responsibilities include about a million acres of rangeland susceptible to grass fires. At times, grass fires have covered 1,500 to 10,000 acres.

The size of the burn areas and difficult topography were already enough to make fighting the fires a challenge. But, when fire departments from other communities or counties had to be called on for assistance, the lack of radios as well as incompatible radio systems made communication difficult, too. To coordinate the efforts of several departments, fire chiefs often had to yell across canyons and streets.

To see what could be done to help the fire fighters better coordinate their efforts, meetings of county, city, and local fire department representatives were arranged through the Four Winds RC&D Area Council. Formation of the Rolling Plains Fire Fighters' Association, the first such multi-county association in Texas, came from the meetings. The participating counties are Childress, Cottle, Foard, Hardeman, Motley, Dickens, and King.

The RC&D council got the Texas Forest Service to provide the association \$10,000 toward the purchase of a radio repeater which they installed on an existing tower; six base radios; and 23 programmable radios for use in fire-fighting vehicles, all of which cost a total of \$24,000. The agency also contributed \$20,000 toward the purchase of five fire trucks. The rest of the funding came from county grants and the proceeds from fund-raising activities of the participating fire departments.

The Rolling Plains Fire Fighters' Association has reaped many benefits since its formation. One benefit is its ability to arrange technical training for member departments, which has so far included training in radio communications from the Texas Forest Service, in handling hazardous materials from the Texas Department of Public Safety, and in emergency medical assistance from the Texas Department of Health.

Since the organization was formed and the communications equipment installed, three major range fires and a petroleum warehouse fire have occurred. All units were in communication before leaving their departments; they knew how to get to the fire, and they knew what equipment and services were needed when they got there. Everything worked like a well-oiled machine.

**H. Von Kleibrink**, coordinator, Four Winds RC&D Area, Quanah, Tex., and **Jim Crownover**, district conservationist, SCS, Paducah, Tex.



From time to time, someone would mention beaver as a possibility, only to hear snorts and chuckles of disapproval from skeptics. But then the local RC&D council decided to take a serious look at the idea.

## Beaver Repair Damaged Streams

**J**OB QUALIFICATIONS READ: **Wanted to work long hours in wet, dirty conditions. Must have webbed feet, furry coats, flat tails, and buckteeth. Must be willing to relocate.**

Not many workers fit this description, but the Wood River Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area Council in southern Idaho found some that did—beaver.

For years, people had looked at the badly eroded stream channels in the four-county area and puzzled over sound, economical methods to improve them. From time to time, someone would mention beaver as a possibility, only to hear snorts and chuckles of disapproval from skeptics. But then the local RC&D council decided to take a serious look at the idea.

In 1985, the council set up a committee that included private landowners and representatives of the Idaho Fish and Game Department, the Idaho Department of Lands, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service, and soil conservation districts. After several meetings, the 10 members of the committee had developed a program to trap beaver in areas where they were plentiful and relocate them in streams where their dams and lodges would slow the water and let the eroded gullies heal.

Over the past 3 years, the program has moved 50 beaver into 8 streams, and the changes are striking. Along the streams adjacent to the beaver ponds, the water table has risen from a depth of more

than 5 feet to only 14 inches below the soil surface. Ducks are nesting on almost every pond. Places where there were no fish are now considered "great fishing." Sagebrush is dying and being replaced with grass. Old aspen stands have been thinned and are resprouting with many young, vigorous trees.

The council is developing methods to discourage beaver from building dams in places they're not wanted, such as road culverts and irrigation diversions. It is also carrying out an education program to make people aware of the benefits of using beaver as a tool in riparian improvement.

"We sure don't have all the answers, but we're learning here in the Wood River RC&D," said Lee Eldridge, chairman of the committee that developed the program. "We do know that we've enjoyed a great deal of success."

Work done by the beaver is settling out sediment so gullies can heal; raising the water table to reestablish riparian complexes; establishing ponding areas for fish and waterfowl; increasing woody species such as aspen, willow, and cottonwood; increasing forage for wildlife and livestock; retarding heavy runoff to increase continuous flows and improve water quality and quantity; and improving conditions for recreation.

Rancher Richard Neal, on whose land the program was tried first, said, "If you want to improve riparian areas on small streams, you should consider beaver as part of your program."

**Lewis L. Pence**, coordinator, Wood River RC&D Area, Gooding, Idaho



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Each grant has led to contributions of other private money, which has made it possible to do more than originally planned.

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## Using Grants to Do More

**M**EMBERS OF THE Great Kanawha Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area Council in southwestern West Virginia haven't let shrinking government funding stop them. The RC&D council received \$50,800 in private grants last year to fund five projects in rural areas: helping purchase an ambulance, stabilizing a schoolground, and improving three parks with playing fields.

The RC&D council obtained four grants totaling \$17,800 from the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation of Charleston and one for \$33,000 from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation of Pittsburgh, two private foundations

with a special interest in the area.

"We used \$2,000 in startup funds for a project that included applying critical area treatment and improving recreation facilities at McCorkle Elementary School, which also serves as a community center for Lincoln County," said Margaret Mills, chairperson of the RC&D council during most of 1988. "The grant money combined with volunteer labor and donated materials resulted in almost \$8,000 worth of improvements at the school. That was the beginning of our grants program."

Since then, the RC&D council has requested matching funds from the foundations to help purchase an ambulance at Hamlin in Lincoln County; install a comfort station at Valley Park and develop a little league baseball field at the Hurricane Middle School, both in Putnam County; and install fences,

lights, and other improvements at Harmon Park at Point Pleasant in Mason County. Each grant has led to contributions of other private money, which has made it possible to do more than originally planned.

There have been other benefits to obtaining private money: The RC&D council has been able to use local sponsors in purchasing materials and hiring local labor or using volunteers, which simplifies contracting procedures and saves time.

"We simply would not have been able to work on and complete these projects without the money from private foundations," Mills said. "We have really appreciated their simple grant request requirements and the interest shown by their staffs. We are sold on using private grants."

**Lowell Wilks**, coordinator, Great Kanawha RC&D Area, Scott Depot, W.Va.

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## Training in Grant Writing Pays Off

**T**RAINING IN writing grant proposals is paying off for the Suwannee River Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council in north-central Florida in a big way.

It all began with a session on applying for grant money at an RC&D regional convention in

Puerto Rico in 1988. That started the council members thinking, and they realized they would need a team of people trained in writing the proposals. With help from civic and government groups, the RC&D council sponsored a grant-writing course and sent nine people to the training. The council sponsored a second course 7 months later and sent five more people.

The council's grant-writing team of 14 then combined their newly acquired skills to apply for a \$300,000 5-year grant available through the Governor's energy office. The council wanted the money to use in promoting no-till

farming to save energy. This fall, the council learned that they would receive \$79,000 for the first year of the project.

The council members feel that the \$450-per-person fee for the grant-writing training plus their time and effort to promote it have really paid off. Enthused by their success, the grant writing team has written four other proposals for RC&D projects, including three for improving recreation and protecting water quality and one for controlling water at school sites.

**Virginia Hungerford**, public affairs specialist, SCS, Gainesville, Fla.

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The RC&D exhibit drew 242 sales leads from firms in 32 States and 13 foreign countries.

## Forestry Expansion Project Under Way

**C**REATION of new jobs and the expansion of the existing forest industry is the goal of the Forestry Expansion Project promoted by the Greater Adirondack Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council in Chestertown, N.Y. According to RC&D Forester Christian Gearwar, retaining jobs is as important to the area's economy as creating new ones.

After the 1980 Winter Olympics, which took place in the Adirondack region of New York, the Greater Adirondack RC&D Council and its forestry committee began to look at ways to improve economic development and create more jobs in the area using the region's forest resources. Next to tourism, forestry is the area's biggest industry. In less than 2 years' time, several RC&D projects have helped retain 78 jobs and create 20 new ones.

With a \$37,000 grant from the Adirondack North Country Association and an additional \$33,000 from private industry, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, private citizens, and the RC&D council provided additional money for several development projects.

One of the projects was the production of a 25-minute video called, "The Olympic Forest." The film showed the history of logging in the area where the Olympics were held and included interviews with forestry and logging industry leaders on how the forest enhances the region's economic well-being.

In 1988, the RC&D council took the film and a 20-foot display of forest products to the International Woodworking Machinery and Furniture Supply Fair in Atlanta, Ga.

Exhibiting at the fair were 778 companies. The RC&D exhibit drew 242 sales leads from firms in 32 States and 13 foreign countries.

Several firms wanted copies of the video to show their industry leaders back home, and the video was sent to four States plus Sweden, Japan, Germany, and Canada. Forest industry representatives from Canada and Japan have already visited the area to look at potential sites for building a secondary wood manufacturing facility.

Another project involved helping a company expand its industry. The company manufactures wood bends for use in chair backs, shoe forms, and other products. Until recently, the company bought lumber cut to size from local sawmills. With the help of the RC&D council and financial backing from the Washington County Industrial Development Association, the company was able to reconstruct a sawmill on its own property. Now, the company uses its own logs, saws them on the premises, dries them in company kilns, and turns out a finished product—all at one location. By increasing efficiency and eliminating the middleman, the company has created three new positions and anticipates more jobs in the future.

Future proposals being considered now have the potential of creating an additional 180 new jobs in the Greater Adirondack RC&D Area.

**Patricia Paul**, public affairs specialist, SCS, Syracuse, N.Y., and **Jim Baker**, coordinator, Greater Adirondack RC&D Area, Chestertown, N.Y.

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## Seed Bank For the Future

**I**N THE IDAHO-WASHINGTON Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area, finding trees is usually easy. Trees are everywhere, mostly conifers.

But, in 1986, the need for trees in northeastern Washington to reforest burned areas and establish plantings on land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) began to far exceed the supply.

To meet the rising demand, area nurseries purchased seed from wherever they could, not always considering if seedlings would be adapted to the elevation or climate. The trees, therefore, had a lower survival rate.

The Idaho-Washington RC&D forestry committee worked to help solve the problem quickly because more than 1.5 million acres of the area's highly erodible farmland was enrolled in the CRP.

The committee worked with the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Soil Conservation Service, and local soil and water conservation districts on developing a seed bank program for collecting, processing, and storing seeds of adapted species. The DNR provided a grant of \$12,000. Under the program, conservation districts hire local people to collect the seed and certify the amount they collect.

After the cones are collected, they are sent to a private nursery in Oregon that extracts the seed from the cones, tests for germination, and puts the seed in cold storage. Conservation districts request seed through the RC&D forestry committee based on local conservation needs and requests from landowners. The RC&D charges districts about \$50 a pound for the seed. Proceeds go to cover future costs for collecting, processing, and storing the seed.

So far, the seed bank program has produced several hundred bushels of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and western larch, worth more than \$10,000 on the commercial market. Today, the seed is being used in establishing plantings on CRP land and reforesting burned areas.

**Gerald T. Johnson**, coordinator, Idaho-Washington RC&D Area, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho